

REMARKS

Claims 1-25 remain pending. Of these, claims 17-25 are allowed.

At the outset, Applicant wishes to thank Examiner Ferris for the constructive personal interview conducted on November 17, 2005. As reflected in the Interview Summary, amendments to independent claim 1 were proposed to clarify the nature of the data associated with the modules. The amendments proposed in the interview are hereby formally presented for entry in this application. As further reflected in the Interview Summary, the Examiner agreed that the proposed amendments appeared to overcome the asserted rejection of claims 1-16 over Billsdon et al. in view of Nishikawa et al.

Without any intent to narrow any of independent claims 1, 17 and 19, each of these claims is clarified to expressly state that the data associated with each of the plurality of modules is data "representing that element." This is believed to have been implicit in original claims 1, 17 and 19; this characteristic is made express to avoid any potential ambiguity.

Claim 1 further describes the nature of the data by specifying that the data facilitates data processing or analysis relating to a second module of the plurality of modules, taking into account the presence of the element in a combination of the second module with the first module. Applicant's representative presented at the interview a simple illustrative example of the modular assignment described in amended Claim 1. As explained in that example, such data processing/analysis with respect to the second module (a module to which the element is not assigned) may include, e.g., generation of a bill of materials (BOM), and calculation of associated materials and labor costs.

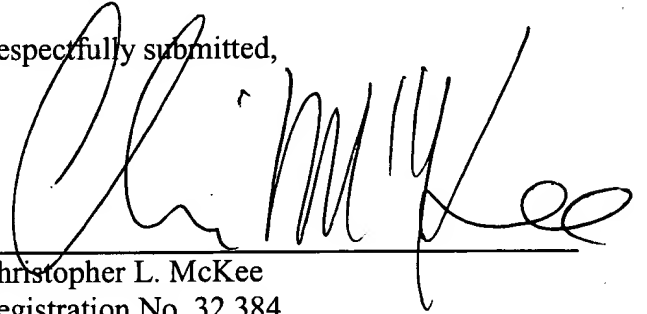
As seemed to be appreciated by the Examiner in the interview, neither the Billsdon et al. article nor the Nishikawa et al. patent discloses or suggests a system as claimed; nor do the

references even address the problem which is addressed by that invention. Neither reference deals with the engineering design issue, which arises before the harness assembly stage, of how to assign elements (e.g., components and wires) to modules, and in particular how to make such assignments when such elements do not fit neatly within a single feature category that may be defined as a module, but rather apply to plural feature categories.

The Billsdon et al. article describes a software product that permits a designer to design a harness assembly drawing by dragging and dropping shapes corresponding to parts. “The shapes automatically snap and glue together...” *Id.* at p. 4. Billsdon et al. thus do not deal with the issue of the assignment of elements to modules for use in a modular wiring harness design approach. On the other hand, Nishikawa et al. describe the manufacture or assembly of a wire harness on the basis of (1) a common circuit and (2) dedicated circuits. Nishikawa et al. presume the existence of predefined circuits with mutually exclusive elements and the ability of those circuits to interconnect with each other, so the problem addressed by the present invention – how to effectively deal with components associated with plural modules that may be assembled in combination with each other – does not arise.

For all of the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner believes that anything further is desirable in order to place the application in even better form for allowance, he is respectfully urged to telephone applicant's undersigned representative at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,



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